Conf - FYI

6/23/72

PERSONAL MEMO

I have not yet spoken to Wecht, but I have been thinking very seriously about what I should say to him. I have already made my decision that I will speak to him, although I still have misgivings about the whole thing and I feel I am in a terrible position. I feel there should be certain definite understandings between Wecht and myself, and when he calls, I will set these forth to him.

First, he must understand that, whatever my misgivings and fears, my principle concern is that he be prepared to make a responsible and informed examination, within his and my own limits, and that whatever he says or writes subsequent to this examination must be responsible in my judgement and must respect the limits of the evidence he has seen, plus the limits of his knowledge and expertise. This is my concern with him, and if we are to cooperate, it must be his concern as well.

In line with this, there are certain conditions which I must stipulate before I will assist him:

1. It is my judgement that the only people who are truly qualified to advise him responsibly are Harold Weisberg and myself, with respect to the full scope of the medical evidence, Dick Bernabei with respect to certain details and technicalities, and Sylvia Meagher with respect to aspects of the case as they relate to the Commission's published records. I have reservations about Sylvia, but I cannot exclude her. Also, I make no claims to the understanding or, in every case, the particular interpretations of Harold, and I feel that Wecht could be better briefed on many aspects by Harold.

To my knowledge there are no other people who I consider qualified to render reliable, responsible advice.

Hence, if I am to advise and brief Cyril on this, I will do it only if he does not seek advice from others he has considered. Bob Smith and Jim Lesar are out of the question, and I will not be involved if they are to give him counsel as well as myself. The same goes for Gary. If Wecht wishes to contact others, he should first check with me, and if he has already received advice, I want to know exactly what others have told him.

2. Wecht must understand that I will have no part in an effort that uses Harold's material. I will not discuss Harold's material, I will not give my approval to the use of any of it. There is a limit to what I can do if Wecht renigs after we have entered into the agreement, but I will tell him that if he uses Harold's material, I will immediately disassociate myself from him.

3. I will consult with Wecht only if it is explicitly understood that he say nothing, write nothing, publish nothing, and contact no newspaper until he has spoken with me in detail about his examination and until I have the opportunity to examine what he plans to publish or state publically. There is no way I can bind him to accept my judgement on what he should or should not say, but he must understand that if he violates my advice, I will disassociate myself from him.

I am not concerned with whether or not this is "democratic" or "fair" to other "researchers." If there is to be even the hope of responsible behavior by Cyril, then I cannot tolerate him seeking the advice of those uninformed and who have previously committed themselves to irresponsible acts and judgements. Cyril too must recognize the severe limits of his own knowledge, and he must agree to respect my judgement on this over those who are uniformed.

This may sound as if I'm off on a great ego-trip. I am not. I realize there is certain knowledge that I possess, and I make no claims to infallibility or omniscience. I feel I have a moral responsibility to prepare Cyril to the best of my ability to act responsibly, and I will try to do this. Also, some of my conditions may sound unrealistic, with little hope of expecting Cyril to abide by them. Nevertheless, I feel I must put them forward to make my position unambiguous, from both a tactical and a moral viewpoint.--Howard Roffman